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Spiritualism Exposed

BY

F. ATTFIELD FAWKES

With an Introduction by

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction by Mr. Nevil Maskelyne	7
PART I.	II
What is Spiritualism?—The Genesis of Modern Spiritualism—Table-turning by Spirits—The truth about Automatic Writing and “Plan- chette”—“The Indicator.”	
PART II.	27
Table-lifting and Human Levitation—Spirit Rapping—Spirit Writing on Slates—The Davenport Brothers.	
PART III.	43
Spiritualist Séances—The Materialisation of Spirits—“Something in it”—Sleight-of-Mind —Self-Hypnotism.	
PART IV.	61
Telepathy or Thought Messages—Why Mediums at all?—Puerile Results of many Spiritualist Manifestations—Spiritualist Messages from Heaven?	

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
PART V.	85
Clairvoyants and Fortune Tellers—Weak Points in Spiritualists' <u>Evidence</u> —Illusion— Hallucination—Spirit Photographs.	
PART VI.	101
Madame Blavatsky—Oriental Magic—Emanuel Swedenborg.	
PART VII.	119
Various Opinions—Statistics—Does Spiritualism emanate from Satan ?—What Result has Spiritualism to show ?	

INTRODUCTION

IN writing upon the subject of so-called "Spiritualism" one is faced with an initial difficulty of some magnitude. That is, in deciding upon the scope of one's article or book. For while all that common sense demands may be put into very few words, all that *can* be said would fill whole libraries.

Thus any attempt to give a satisfactory *résumé* of the subject naturally involves much deliberation in deciding what must necessarily be included and what may reasonably be left out.

In the present instance Mr. Fawkes has done his work admirably. He knows his subject, and has condensed within the bounds of a small volume a vast amount of information. Not only so, he has fulfilled the first duty of every

INTRODUCTION

writer. In other words, he has made his matter interesting.

The present revival of the craze for spiritualism is a moral scourge of the first magnitude. Upon those who realise the gravity of the situation devolves the duty of doing all they can to create an efficient counter-blast to doctrines which are detrimental to the sanity of the world at large. It is too much, perhaps, to hope that convinced spiritualists may be led to see the error of their ways. The simple fact is that, as a rule, people are either superstitious or they are not. To the superstitious spiritualism is readily acceptable. To those who are not cursed with that mental taint, spiritualism is, in its essence, anathema. It is to the waverers—to those who are inclined to believe that “there may be something in it”—that a book such as this should prove of the utmost value. It may help to stabilise their mental equilibrium and to preserve their common sense.

INTRODUCTION

It is all very well to point to the number of eminent men who are confessed believers in this doctrine, to say that when spiritualism is upheld by the authority of some of the greatest names all men not so distinguished should hold their tongues. There is a reverse to that medal. What about the far greater number of equally eminent men who will not accept spiritualistic doctrines at any price ? If eminent authority is to be the criterion, the doctrines of spiritualism are utterly condemned by the sheer weight of authority concentrated against them.

Once again we come to the fundamental fact. Some men, however eminent, are superstitious. Many more men, equally eminent, are not. The former accept spiritualism, the latter reject it. It is easy to say, as believers do, that those who reject the doctrine simply do not understand it—have never investigated the phenomena. It is a parrot cry, and has no relation to fact.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the sceptics have had far more experience of spiritualism, and have devoted far more time to its investigation, than the vast bulk of professed believers.

With this reflection, I commend Mr. Fawkes' volume to the earnest attention of the thinking public.

NEVIL MASKELYNE.

Spiritualism Exposed

PART I

What is Spiritualism?—The Genesis of Modern Spiritualism—Table-turning by Spirits—The Truth about Automatic Writing and “Planchette”—“The Indicator.”

WHAT IS SPIRITUALISM?

“I CAN call spirits from the vasty deep,” said Owen Glendower.

To whom Harry Hotspur replied :

“Why, so can I; or so can any man: but will they come when you do call for them?”

It is to attempt to answer this question of Shakespeare—a question which never before has thrust itself so prominently into

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

public notice and so persistently and insistently demanded of men and women an answer—that this volume has been written.

Vast numbers have been deeply impressed, not to say fascinated, with the problem of the possibility of communication between human beings on earth and departed spirits. For it was obvious to them, as it is to you and me, that if this fact could be conclusively proved :—

1. It would add enormously to our knowledge of spiritual things.

2. It would give us great comfort to be able to communicate with our dear departed ones.

3. It would settle once for all many conditions now unknown regarding a future life.

It is not strange, therefore, that there should be a universal yearning for communication of some sort in this direction. In fact, humanity has long been anxiously looking for a rift in the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

veil which hides the unseen from the seen. What does Jean Ingelow write ?

“ Oh, my lost love, and my own, own love,
And my love that loved me so !
Is there never a chink in the world above
Where they listen for words from below ? ”

From my youth I have devoted a considerable amount of spare time to investigations and inquiries regarding this absorbing subject ; for I need not say that I could not accept such a tremendous fact unless it could be proved to my entire satisfaction. The following pages may be said to embody a condensed record of sixty years' observation of spiritualism.

What is spiritualism, and how can it be defined ? Dictionaries give us practically two different definitions of spiritualism :—

1. The original meaning : *The doctrine of the existence of spirit independent of matter.* A doctrine intelligible, legitimate, orthodox, and at the present time almost universally recognised.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

2. The modern meaning, first applied during the last century : *Belief in communication with departed spirits by mediums.* A belief accepted by some, disputed by the majority, and forming a lively topic of contentious discussion just now. To distinguish this second form of spiritualism from the first it is called "modern spiritualism."

I do not propose to touch upon that spiritual influence, both good and bad, which most of us are willing to acknowledge is exerted upon human beings in many diverse ways : such as by preachers, teachers, lecturers, the example and precept of men and women with whom we come in contact, strangers as well as friends and relatives ; the created works of the Almighty ; books, newspapers and other printed matter ; pictures and illustrations, etc. I am even prepared to include in this list unseen spirits which may possibly hover round us, or the disembodied spirits of those who were once denizens of earth. These and many

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

other unknown and unsuspected causes may have a grave spiritual influence upon our lives and actions ; but such spiritual influences *per se* I do not propose to consider here.

Neither do I desire to engage in a general discussion or investigation of those many undiscovered natural forces and natural powers which we regard as mysteries when we happen for the first time accidentally to encounter them.

Spiritualists in the past, in their great eagerness to open up communication with the spirit world, have been too apt to jump to the conclusion that any obscure, unexplained phenomena of natural or psychological science, which they do not understand, have been messages from the spirit world, and have immediately labelled such phenomena "spiritualistic manifestations."

Undoubtedly this tendency has been responsible in many cases for the widespread impression that "there may be something in it."

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Suppose, for instance, that fifty years ago spiritualists in some of their séances had accidentally stumbled across, in a hazy kind of way, an example of the wonderful wireless telegraphy, or the more wonderful wireless telephony, or the still more wonderful theory of atomic energy, by which we learn that there exists latent force in the atoms composing a glass of water, sufficient, if liberated and suitably controlled, to lift the whole British Navy to the top of Mont Blanc! Without doubt those spiritualists would have attributed such a mysterious phenomenon to the spirits, and spiritualism generally would have been much encouraged and stimulated.

My main object in this volume—and I cannot be too emphatic in this respect—will be to discuss the possibility or otherwise of *actual intelligible communication between human beings on earth and spirits inhabiting the spiritual world*. I take it that this point, and not mere

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

spiritual influence or the mysteries of science, is the vital principle, the exclusive characteristic, and the central feature of modern spiritualism.

For it is perfectly obvious that man can receive spiritual influences of many kinds and be involved in many inexplicable mysterious forces of nature—such as water and metal divining, telepathy, etc.—without in the least implying that these mysterious forces are actual messages or communications from the spirit world.

THE GENESIS OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

Let us first glance at the origin of this cult, and then describe a few of the many manifestations and alleged messages which have been attributed to spirits.

Although modern spiritualism is generally considered to date from 1843, it was really started by Swedenborg exactly one hundred years earlier, when in 1743, at 58 years of age, he commenced writing his famous descriptions of his alleged expeditions to the spirit world.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

However, leaving Swedenborg out of the question for the moment, we find that about the year 1843 a man named Andrew Jackson Davis, the son of a cobbler of Poughkeepsie, in America, claimed powers of vision and clairvoyance. An itinerant mesmerist named Levington saw that money could be made out of this, and the pair went about the country giving shows of clairvoyance at five dollars a head. The visions were very fantastic, and the spiritual part of them very hazy. At the present moment there are in Great Britain 240 Spiritualist Associations, called "Lyceum Unions," with a membership of 24,000, chiefly of young people, who take Andrew Jackson Davis as their prophet and seer. They call him the "Father of Modern Spiritualism."

The next manifestations were the spirit rapping of the two daughters of a Mr. John D. Fox, of Hydesville, in the State of New York. I will refer to these two girls later on.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

The earliest manifestation of spiritualism in England, however, about the year 1852, was—

TABLE-TURNING BY SPIRITS.

Several persons sat round a small table and placed their hands lightly upon it. They were told not to push the table in any direction. After waiting some time, if the spirits were propitious the table would begin to turn. There was no particular message from the spirits in this, only the evidence of their presence.

Faraday, the great scientist, investigated this curious phenomenon. He constructed an instrument for placing under the hands of the sitters for showing the pressure to the right or left.

This little instrument was made as follows :—

He took two stiff pieces of millboard about 8 in. by 6 in., placed two rollers (pieces of round glass rods) between the boards, and encircled these boards with

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

two light elastic bands. When the finger-tips of each of the table-turning operators rested on this instrument, if after a time the upper board would slip on the glass rollers, this proved that, though the table-turner was unconscious of it, he exercised a certain pressure.

By the use of this instrument Faraday conclusively proved that the table-turning was simply the result of sub-conscious muscular action by the sitters, and had nothing whatever to do with the spirits. In fact, the movement of the little instrument was generally in the same direction as the table was expected to turn—a significant result.

THE TRUTH ABOUT AUTOMATIC WRITING AND “PLANCHETTE.”

Spiritualists accepted this explanation so far as table-turning was concerned, but very soon cast about to see how they could turn this scientific fact to their advantage. They said, “Yes, we quite agree that in table-turning it is the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

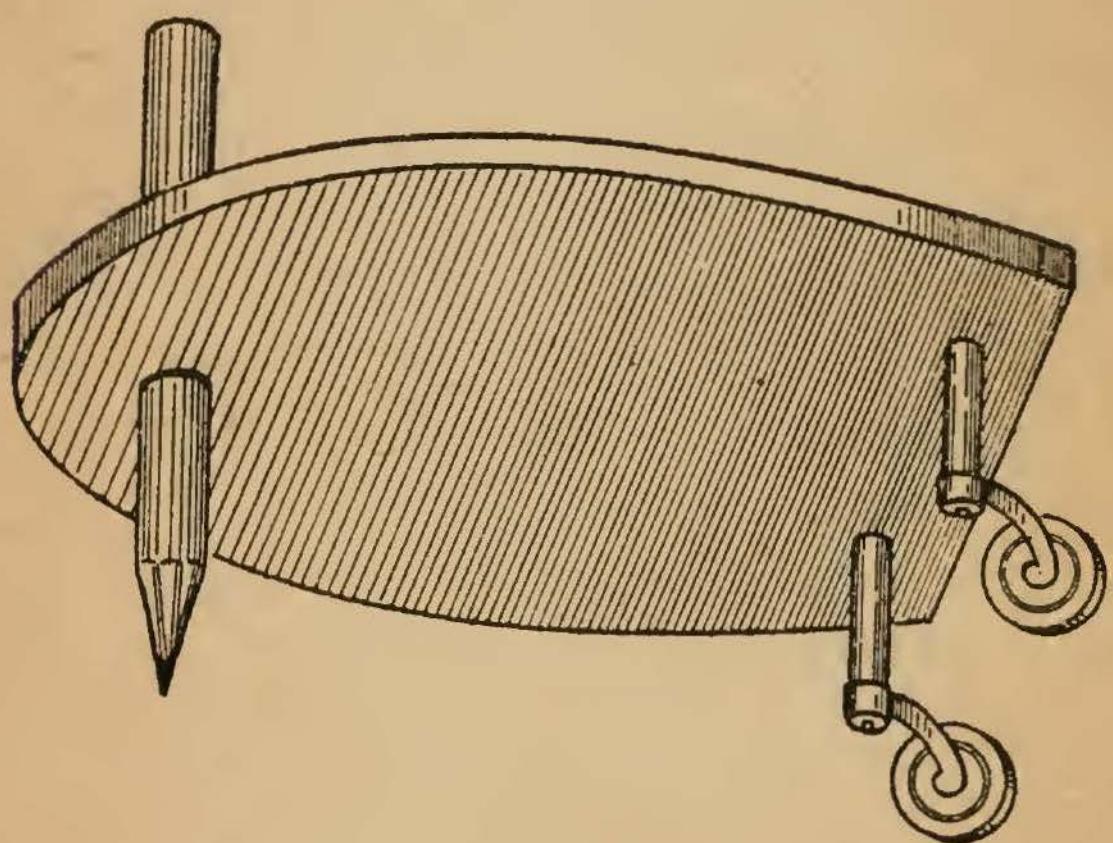
sub-conscious mind which produces the muscular action without the person being conscious of it: Happy thought ! Why not make Faraday's little instrument in a modified form, use it for writing, but instead of saying it is simply the "sub-conscious mind" which writes, take a step further, and suggest—nothing more will be required—simply suggest that *the spirits guide the sub-conscious mind* ? It will be very difficult to disprove this, and in this way we can get the credulous to believe that messages come from the other world."

They did so, fixed a pencil vertically in the rolling board, arranged for a free sliding movement of the board in any direction, and adjusted the pencil so that its point, as the rolling plate moved, should trace a line corresponding to the movement. They called this modified instrument "planchette" or "ouija board"; and from that day to this these instruments have had the credit of recording messages from the spirits,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

while all the time the self-deceived victims who believed this fiction have been calmly, complacently and quite unknowingly *writing their own messages*.

The following illustration shows the present form of "planchette."



As will be seen, it consists of a thin oval board, about $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. long by $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, supported on a tripod of three short legs. One of them is the pencil fixed through a hole in the board. Each of the other two legs terminates in a

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

little thin wheel attached to a swivel arrangement like the caster on the leg of a chair. The two little wheels are very sensitive, and respond immediately in any direction to the slightest movement of the fingers of the operator pressing on the board, causing the point of the pencil to record this movement on a piece of paper placed under the board. In this way writing by either the conscious or sub-conscious muscular action of the fingers, after a little practice, is quite easy.

As the pencil is not raised from the paper, except at the end of a line—when of course the whole instrument has to be transferred to the commencement of the next line—the words in each line are joined together.

Thus was written another chapter in the history of spiritualist credulity and superstition. Look at the irony of the situation ! The very means which were employed to prove that spiritualist claims were false were subsequently utilised to bolster up those very claims !

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

During recent years some spiritualists have complained that "planchette" was too slow for them. They therefore adopted a modification, which they called—

"THE INDICATOR."

This consists of a piece of board about 12 in. long by 6 in. wide. Near the edge of one of the longer sides are marked a number of little squares containing the letters of the alphabet, spaces and numerals, with "try again" at one end and "good-bye" at the other. On the top of this base-board, running backwards and forwards in slots, is a little board on wheels, somewhat similar to "planchette," but much smaller, and in the place of the pencil there is an arm with a pointer.

To work the instrument the fingers are placed on the upper running-board, and the "spirits" cause the pointer to stop opposite the letter, number or space required. In this way spiritualists claim that they can receive "messages" much more rapidly than by the pencil in "planchette."

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Of course, with this "indicator" an amanuensis is required to take down the messages; or the operator, if skilful, can work "the indicator" with one hand and write down the messages with the other.

However, whether "planchette" or an "indicator" is used, the principle is precisely the same. The sub-conscious mind produces unconscious muscular action of the fingers, in the one case working a pencil, in the other case making a pointer indicate certain letters and numbers.

I have given the above details rather minutely in consequence of the enormous stimulus which "planchette" and automatic writing have received lately. In connection with these details, read "Self-Hypnotism" Part III. and the evidence of Dr. Wilson on the action of the sub-conscious mind in section "Various Opinions," Part VII. Also bear the same in mind when you read in Part IV. about the "Spiritualist Messages from Heaven?"

Here is a recent warning against the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

use—or rather abuse—of “planchette.” Under the heading of “Planchette Madness,” *The Daily Express* (March 25th, 1920) prints the following from its New York correspondent:—

“ Dispatches from San Francisco state that at the village of Cerrito, across San Francisco Bay, the craze for séances with ‘ouija boards’ (‘planchette’)—with which it is claimed that spirit messages can be received—has reached such a pitch that five people have been driven mad and taken to the lunatic asylum. There is a strong demand for the examination of all the 1,200 inhabitants of the village by mental specialists.”

A subsequent message states that a general medical examination of the inhabitants was to be made, and that in some instances it was found that as much as £140 in notes had been burned to the “evil spirits,” while children in the same house were starving !

PART II

Table-lifting and Human Levitation — Spirit Rapping — Spirit Writing on Slates — The Davenport Brothers.

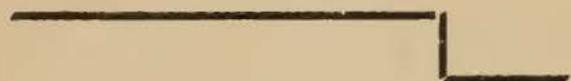
TABLE-LIFTING AND HUMAN LEVITATION.

ANOTHER mysterious manifestation occurred when a table, sometimes very heavy, actually rose in the air, notwithstanding the sitters' hands were pressed on the top of it to prevent it rising. At this—as in fact at all spiritualist manifestations—mediums must be present. I can distinctly remember one of these manifestations occurred in the year 1859, when I was about ten years old and was staying with my grandfather at Whetstone, near Barnet. The table, a very heavy one, with four massive turned legs, rose quite eighteen inches from the floor, then crashed down, completely

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

smashing one of the legs. I shall never forget my awe and horror.

For a long time this table-lifting was really believed to be the work of spirits, until a sceptical, inquisitive person discovered that the medium and a confederate on the other side of the table used crooked pieces of flat iron of this shape—



to lift tables. To use them the long arms were strapped firmly to the wrists, and the whole was easily hidden by the coat cuffs.

Of course, the general idea was that by the intervention of spirits the force of gravitation could be overcome and neutralised—a miracle, in fact. In proof of this the spiritualists claimed, not only that tables could be lifted, but that the bodies of living persons could be made to float in the air without any visible means of support. But as this appeared

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

to be a little beyond the powers of the ordinary English medium, they fell back upon "oriental magic," and pointed out that this levitation had been produced by Indian fakirs, who derived the necessary power from the spirits.

However, it was soon discovered that in regard to levitation there was "nothing doing" in India ; and to confound and confute the spiritualists, Mr. Maskelyne clearly demonstrated that the above remarkable feat *could* be performed, but merely as a very clever conjuring trick, which I have myself seen many times.

Of course, mediums have frequently endeavoured to persuade their dupes that they (the mediums) have been floating about the room during a dark séance, by simply taking off their shoes and lightly touching the heads of the sitters with these shoes !

SPIRIT RAPPING.

A number of persons, the medium included, sat round a table, placed their

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

hands on the top, and waited for the spirits to come. Presently raps would be heard. To communicate with the spirits two codes were used. One code by which it was ascertained if a spirit were present and willing to give a message. In this code one rap meant "no," two raps meant "doubtful," three raps meant "yes." The other code was for actually receiving messages after it was ascertained that the "spirit was willing." This code consisted in the medium slowly calling out the letters of the alphabet, beginning at "A." The spirit rapped when the required letter was reached. Words and sentences could easily, but very slowly, be made out in this way.

For a long time these messages were really thought to emanate from spirits. But it was ultimately and finally discovered, that in all cases the medium produced the raps either by:—

1. Slightly lifting, by means of his

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

knee, one corner of the table and dropping it on the ground.

2. Rubbing his shoe against the polished leg of the table.

3. Doubling his fingers and sharply slipping them off the table.

4. Electric contact, worked by the foot of the medium. Of course, this was only possible in the house of the medium or a confederate.

5. A little instrument containing a magnet, placed in the breast pocket of the medium and worked by pressing his arm against his body. In a book written in 1871 by Dr. Edmunds he states that he had the evidence of a surgeon who was in the habit of supplying these identical magnets to mediums for séances.

6. A very ingenious mode of rapping was practised by the two girls named Kate and Margaret Fox, to whom I have already referred. For a long time they quite baffled all discovery by many

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

scientific investigators. But it was finally and conclusively proved that they rapped by actually snapping their toe, knee and finger joints so loudly that they could be distinctly heard. Of late years I have met several cases of persons who have, by practice, for mere amusement, been able to snap their joints in this way.

The curious part about this particular manifestation was that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in a "Confession of Faith," includes a full belief in the spirit rapping of these two Fox girls, and he quotes also the published conviction of the late Sir William Crookes on the subject. There are many other ways of spirit rapping, but the above may be taken as typical examples.

By far the most notorious spirit rapper was Daniel Dunglas Home. For a long time he flourished and coined money. Finally he rapped out messages to a Mrs. Lyons from her deceased husband's spirit. He netted about £30,000 from

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the unfortunate widow. A lawsuit followed, the imposture and fraud were discovered, and Home was ruined as a spiritualist. Yet—yet—there were people who still continued to believe in him as a man who could communicate with spirits—notably the late Sir William Crookes.

Another spiritualist mystery was—

SPIRIT WRITING ON SLATES.

Dr. Slade from America introduced and boomed this mystery very successfully. For a long time everyone thought, “Here is a genuine instance of spirits sending us messages.” There were simply dozens of ways in which this clever medium carried out his startling manifestations ; but they were all finally discovered and exposed. I can only describe a few of them.

Two ordinary wood-framed writing slates were placed one on the other, hinged on one edge so that they opened like a book. The other edges were

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

fastened by a padlock. The medium showed the slates open with no writing inside. Then he placed a slate pencil between them, allowing one of the audience to lock the padlock and keep the key. The locked slates were then placed on the table and the lights turned down. Presently a scratching noise was heard. Then it ceased. The lights were turned up and the slates unlocked, when a mysterious message was found written on the inside of one of the slates. Of course, it was the work of the spirits. How could it be otherwise?

It was afterwards discovered, however, that the medium could open the slates without touching the padlock by taking out the pin of the hinge, which was easily removable, so that it could be drawn out and the slate *opened at the hinge*, a very simple operation in the dark.

Another slate trick consists in members of the audience screwing together at the four corners two ordinary framed slates with no writing on them, yet when

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the lights are turned up there is a mysterious sentence written on the inside of the slates.

This is effected as follows :—

The slates are fairly large ones, with thin frames which will bend, the slates themselves being made of composition. A small wedge is inserted in the middle of one side, the slates being thus forced slightly apart. A thin rod is then inserted having at the end a tiny morsel of slate pencil fixed at right angles to the rod. Writing on the inside of the slates—in the dark—is then quite easy.

Another trick is to take two slates, one of which has a false, removable side. After the two slates are screwed together by a member of the audience, it is quite easy to remove the false side in the dark and write on the inside of one of the slates.

Yet another very simple device is for the medium to provide himself with a thimble in the end of which is fixed a very small piece of slate pencil, the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

thimble being attached by a piece of elastic to the inside of the medium's coat sleeve a little way up from the cuff. With this contrivance, and with some amount of practice, a medium can manage, with one hand only, to hold a slate under a table and write a word or very short sentence—of course, in a rather crooked manner—even with the lights turned up.

Dr. Slade, after netting hundreds of pounds a week for a considerable time, was caught red-handed by Professor Lankester and Dr. Donkin, prosecuted with his manager at Bow Street, and sentenced to three months' hard labour. To gain time he appealed, but before the case came on they both escaped to the Continent.

The late Mr. J. N. Maskelyne made a very good test for spirit writing on slates. He took two slates, on one of which he wrote a question. He then put a slate pencil between them, screwed them together, pasted round the edges

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

with paper, put them in a tin case, and soldered the lid on. He then challenged any medium to answer the question on the slates by means of spirits. From that day to this, although numerous mediums have tried, not one has succeeded.

You have doubtless heard or read of those world-famous mediums—

THE DAVENPORT BROTHERS.

The chief manifestations of the two brothers Ira and William consisted in the spirits performing all sorts of mysterious acts while the brothers were securely tied up in a cabinet, the whole room being in semi-darkness. In this cabinet—which had three doors facing the audience—bells, tambourines, etc., were placed for the use of the spirits. The two brothers, tied up, sat on seats behind the side doors. All the doors being shut, a great noise inside the cabinet would be heard, the centre door

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

would be opened from the inside, the bells, etc., flung out on to the platform, and the centre door shut. Then instantly the side doors would be opened and the two brothers would be seen tied up as before. Of course, it was the work of the spirits.

After the brothers had netted many thousands of pounds, one day at a séance at Cheltenham the accidental falling of a piece of drapery from a shaded window caused a ray of light to shine into the cabinet at the moment the centre door happened to be opened. Mr. J. N. Maskelyne, a jeweller of the town, who was present, immediately saw how the trick was done, and in a short time he and a friend of his, a Mr. Cooke, were enabled to reproduce exactly all the tricks of the notorious brothers. This was the commencement of the famous Maskelyne & Cooke combination. The chief trick, I may remark, consisted in the ingenious use of a trick-noose or double slip-knot, by which the medium

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

could instantly release his hands and as instantly tie them up again.

One of the Davenport Brothers' tests was to hold dried peas in each hand and place a piece of paper under their feet, marking round each foot with a pencil to prove that they never moved from their seats, but that it was the spirits who were responsible for the manifestations.

This test presented no difficulty, for the moment the hands were freed from the double slip-knot the peas could be put in the trousers pockets and taken out again when required. When they had finished their tricks, the paper could be turned over and fresh pencil marks be made round the feet on the reverse side of the paper.

Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke improved upon this test in their imitations of the Davenport Brothers' manifestations. They not only had a pencil line drawn round their feet, but also a chalk line drawn on the floor round the paper, to

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

prove it was not moved. This was managed with two fine drawing pins pressed through the paper just in front of the toes of their shoes. In the dark the pins acted as guides to bring the feet back to the same position, when the pins would be withdrawn.

Another of the Davenports' tests was to hold flour in each hand. This was rather more difficult than the dried peas, but was overcome by Mr. Maskelyne as follows :—

After releasing his hands from the slip-knots, he simply put the flour upon the polished seat of the cabinet, and wiped his hands with his handkerchief. When the trick was finished, he scraped the whole of the flour into one hand, dusted the seat, returned the handkerchief to his pocket, put a portion of the flour into the other hand, and came out of the cabinet showing flour in each hand and everything around quite clean.

Another method of dealing with the flour test is for the medium simply to

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

put his hands into his pockets, which are made deep for the purpose, deposit the flour in them, and wipe his hands either on the linings of the pockets or on his handkerchief. When the time comes to put the flour back into his hands again, he takes a concealed bag of flour from another of his pockets and pours a little into each hand. In this case also there is no risk of the flour being dropped about.

William Davenport ultimately went to Australia and died there, but not before he had confessed, on his dying bed, that the wonderful manifestations by his brother and himself were mere tricks and sleight of hand, and had nothing whatever to do with the spirits.



PART III

Spiritualist Séances — The Materialisation of Spirits—“Something in it”—Sleight-of-Mind —Self-Hypnotism.

SPIRITUALIST SÉANCES.

THOUSANDS of these have been held all over the country for years past, most of them taking place with the lights down, for the spirits appear to have had a prejudice against manifesting *except in the dark*. In this connection Mr. David Gow, Editor of *Light*, recently informed *Pearson's Weekly* (see issue of February 21st, 1920) that the great majority of séances are now held in the light. Be this as it may, it proves nothing, for are not all conjuring performances invariably held in the light? Anyhow, we have the evidence of enormous numbers of investigators that séances in the past

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

have certainly been held either in the dark or the semi-dark, with the lights turned down.

However, putting this on one side, here is a specimen séance, quite typical of the vast number which have been held. The sitters and the medium usually sit round a table, upon which are placed bells, tambourines and other musical instruments for the use of the spirits. As a precaution against the medium playing any tricks, he is careful to suggest that both his hands shall be held by those sitting next him. Or if the medium be a lady, she will probably suggest that she continue to clap her hands during the whole séance. Then the lights will be turned down.

Presently, if the spirits are propitious, mysterious manifestations will take place. Bells will ring, noses will be tweaked, hair pulled, tambourines banged in different parts of the room, luminous spirit lights will float about, a luminous face will be seen here and there. In fact,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the spirits will play such pranks with the nerves of the poor frightened sitters that they will hardly know where they are, and will be glad when the lights are turned up again. Of course, it is the spirits.

I have no time to describe fully how at séance after séance these manifestations were discovered to be tricks, chiefly by sceptical sitters turning up the lights at the wrong time and disclosing all the conjuring apparatus of the mediums, when it was found that the dupes were holding each others hands instead of those of the medium, who had managed, by spasmodic jerks in the dark, gradually to join the hands of the sitters on each side of him, leaving both his own hands free to perform his tricks. Of course, he intended, if not disturbed, by the same spasmodic nervous jerks, again to get his hands introduced into the circle before the lights were turned up. The lady medium, instead of clapping both hands, would be clapping her forehead

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

with one hand, leaving the other free. It is astonishing what tricks can be done even with one hand.

Here is another method by which the medium can free his hands at a séance. He will stand behind one of the sitters, whose upper arms he will firmly grasp, and continue to do so throughout the séance. But the sitter would be very surprised if he knew that the hands holding him so firmly were made of wood, coated with rubber, and covered with chamois leather gloves, such hands being fixed on to a spring clamp, so as to maintain a tenacious hold. Of course, this ingenious apparatus can only be introduced after the lights are turned down, and sleight-of-handed away before the lights are turned up again.

Another test method of "holding" the medium is for the sitters on each side of him to press upon his toes with their feet. The medium can easily overcome this and release his feet whenever he desires by having loose toe-caps

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

made to fit his feet and coloured to match his boots. These toe-caps are lined with thin spun brass, so as to yield slightly when the feet are withdrawn from them and they are pressed by the sitters on each side.

At one séance Mr. Stuart Cumberland managed, without being seen, to daub some lamp-black on the tambourine, bells, etc., which were placed on the table for the use of the spirits. At the end of the séance, when the lights were turned up, the medium found his hands smothered with black! On another occasion the same gentleman managed to secure a bottle of phosphorised oil used for the production of spirit lights, a mask coated with luminous paint, a pair of lazy tongs with which the spirit face was floated over the sitters, and *a real spirit hand*, viz. a blown-out glove, smeared with luminous paint.

A very important spiritualist manifestation is what is called—

THE MATERIALISATION OF SPIRITS.

This is the power of making spirits, which as you know are invisible, quite

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

visible to mortal eyes. There are various theories put forward by spiritualists regarding this wonderful power. Here is one (*vide* "Rita" in her book, *The Truth of Spiritualism*) :—

"From the side of the medium (in a state of trance) a thin, slender cord is drawn; this seems to take to itself a certain power of radiating ethereality, and gradually builds up the shadowy yet distinct appearance of a visible being."

Here is another theory (*vide Problems of The Spiritual*, by the Rev. Arthur Chambers, author of several works on Spiritualism) :—

"The spirit takes the 'aura'—which is matter in a fluid condition—as it exhales from the bodies of persons present and consolidates this 'aura' round the spiritual self in such a way as to form a temporary physical encasement, which encasement is as appreciable by the eyes and the touch as any ordinary physical body. This 'aura' is similar in appearance to the mist-like exhalation which

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

can be seen arising from a hard-driven horse on a frosty day. It is physical matter in a gaseous state, and from all persons it is constantly exhaling. Some bodies give it off more freely than others, and those with whom this is the case constitute the 'mediums,' the ones so essential to materialisation."

Comment on these absurd, fantastic explanations is quite unnecessary.

Time after time materialised spirits have been found either by clutching them or turning up the lights, when they appeared to be the medium or an accomplice.

A certain medium named Florrie Corner claimed she could materialise numerous spirits, among them two which she called "Marie" and "Katie King." I mention this incident because it is alleged that the late Sir William Crookes believed in both medium and spirit. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is also said to have appeared to think highly of "Katie King."

At a séance in Bloomsbury two under-

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

graduates of Christ Church, Oxford, clutched "Marie," who turned out to be the medium herself—with very few clothes on!

Another medium was a man named Bastion, who was famous for materialising spirits. At one of his séances Mr. Stuart Cumberland relates in his book, *Spiritualism—The Inside Truth*, how he held a ball syringe filled with a solution of cochineal in his hand. When the spirit appeared Mr. Cumberland squirted the cochineal straight at its face. There was a terrible uproar, especially from the believers. But when the lights were turned up there was the medium with cochineal on his face. Afterwards the following appeared in *Punch* :—

"Spirits are as slippery as eels to feel;
So, would you catch a spirit, coch—ineal."

It is related that this medium afterwards went to Vienna, and having been detected in masquerading as a Hapsburg ghost in an archducal palace, was

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

promptly thrown out by the infuriated inmates.

Here is what a “spirit” once had to put up with. At a séance, after the lights were turned down, a Yankee medium was supposed to materialise the spirit of Dante. Now spirits, as you may well imagine, never condescend to walk about in shoes and stockings, it might offend their dignity, besides such articles of clothing would really be too materialistic for spirits. A sceptic in the audience threw a number of tin tacks on the floor immediately after the lights were turned down. No sooner did the spirit “begin to walk” than very lurid Yankee language was heard—by no means Florentine—and the voice was unmistakably that of the medium.

Talking about materialised spirits, would you be surprised to hear that the Kaiser has for a long time kept in his watch-case a bit of muslin fluff which he was told came from the garment of a materialised spirit ?

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

“ SOMETHING IN IT.”

There is a very curious mental attitude on the part of many people who are not out and out spiritualists. A man will go to séances and see mediums exposed time after time. Naturally you will think that this will convince him. But it does not. Even after all you will find him saying, “I think there must be something in it.” *The Times*, commenting on this in a review of a book, *That Other World*, by Mr. Stuart Cumberland, pointed out how this strange belief in there being “something in it” made possible the continued chicaneries of “Mr. Sludge the Medium.” It is said that Robert Browning wrote his poem, “Mr. Sludge the Medium,” after attending a séance by Daniel Dunglas Home.

As described in Section “What is Spiritualism ?” Part I., the following may also, in some cases, contribute to this peculiar attitude of “There may be something in it” :—

The curious action of the sub-conscious mind.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Many causes of spiritual influence, quite outside the possibility of any actual communication from spirits.

The accidental encounter by spiritualists of mysteries of natural physical or psychological science which they do not understand.

SLEIGHT OF MIND.

We have discussed sleight-of-hand in connection with spiritualism, but there is something much more important, and that is "sleight-of-mind." This is much more difficult to detect and much better adapted to deceive. In fact, spiritualists are now relying more upon sleight-of-mind than sleight-of-hand.

In a letter to the *Daily Mail* (December 16th, 1919) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writes :—

"In the early days of this (the spiritualist) movement it was foretold by Mrs. de Morgan and others that the line of advance would be from the crude material phenomena, common in those

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

days, to the finer and more intellectual proofs which the human race would become more fitted to receive. This prophecy has, in the course of the last fifty years, been amply justified. The spirit rap, levitations and even materialisations have become far less common. The evidence in these directions has been given, and this stage appears to be closing down. On the other hand, we have never before had such an outburst of the finer phases of spirit intervention, of spirit photography, of inspirational addresses, writings and paintings, and very especially of that clairvoyance or 'discerning of spirits' which Saint Paul counted among the most valuable of spiritual gifts."

My explanation of this change from "crude material phenomena" to the "finer and more intellectual proofs" would certainly be that the sleight-of-hand business in the past having been thoroughly exposed and discredited, spiritualists are now simply appealing to

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

sleight-of-mind in an ineffectual endeavour to save their faces.

The chief object, however, of Sir Arthur writing the above letter was to draw attention to a picture of a marvellous head. He wrote :—

“ Yet this wonderful work was done in a few hours by a lady who, as I am assured by her family, has no power of artistic expression when in her normal condition. It is a supreme example of the working of spiritual intelligence through a material mortal frame.”

In this connection it is curious to note that a fortnight afterwards (December 31st, 1919) the *Daily Mail* printed a reply from the lady’s husband stating that she had been out of England since November, so did not immediately see the letter referred to, had been interested in art since her childhood, had painted numerous pictures, including the one mentioned, all in a perfectly normal manner, and was disgusted at having “ psychic ” power attributed to her !

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Additional examples of "sleight-of-mind," such as automatic writing, the action of the sub-conscious mind, clairvoyance, etc., are discussed and explained in other sections (see Parts I., IV., V. and VII.) as well as in the following Section.

SELF-HYPNOTISM.

Now so far as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the other members of the small minority of scientists, as well as the Rev. G. Vale Owen and the vast number of lesser lights who believe in spiritualism, are concerned, I am strongly of opinion that they are all sincere, honest, conscientious men, who firmly believe that they are doing God, religion, and the scientific world service by propagating spiritualism. At the same time, I am also as strongly of opinion that they are mistaken men, deceived by auto-suggestion—in a word, unconscious self-hypnotism. They are so absorbed by the intense desire to penetrate the veil

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

which hides the spirit-world, that their excited and stimulated brains subconsciously produce impressions on their ears, eyes and minds of things which do not exist at all. They are suffering, in fact, from delusions and hallucinations—without knowing it.

Why am I so emphatic on this point ? Simply because I have never yet heard or read that at any séance, anywhere, at any time, has there ever been any spiritualist manifestation *when test conditions have been perfect*. It is a very lame excuse, even if it be not utter rubbish, for the spiritualists to meet this, as they do, by contending that spirits are so sensitive that the presence of a critical, doubting influence will prevent them from manifesting.

Depend upon it, more especially in later times, when the public have been “fed up” with the sleight-of-hand business, that suggestion and auto-suggestion have had more to do with spiritualism than the public are aware.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Probably at the bottom of the whole thing is the curious action of the sub-conscious mind (see Dr. Sidney R. Wilson's explanation of this at the end of "Various Opinions," Part VII.).

It may help to make self-hypnotism and the working of the sub-conscious mind a little clearer if I describe, in general terms, what usually happens when we dream.

In this state, of course, the conscious mind is asleep ; but under the influence of some stimulus, such as indigestion, nervous trouble, worry, extremes of heat or cold, or other exciting causes, action of the sub-conscious mind takes place, and we dream.

Now, while there may have been some exceptional cases of persons who have reasoned, or thought they reasoned, in their dreams, I think it may be taken as a general rule that our sub-conscious mind is unable either to reason or to argue, possesses no controlling will, and blindly relies on memory only. Hence

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

our dreams are frequently erratic, absurd, extravagant, exaggerated, impossible, the reverse of the truth, and totally lacking in responsibility.

Something very similar takes place when we start to write with planchette, ouija-board or the indicator. We voluntarily surrender our will, render dormant our controlling conscious mind, and give our sub-conscious mind full liberty to do all the thinking and writing.

In other words, a person who uses automatic writing practically hypnotises him or herself, and dreams while he or she is awake.

Therefore, can we be surprised if in these circumstances the result of our automatic writing resembles our dreams, and is frequently erratic, absurd, extravagant, exaggerated, impossible, the reverse of the truth, and totally lacking in responsibility.

If, however, automatic writing is indulged in freely and continuously, there arrives a time when the resources of the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

sub-conscious mind become inadequate. Then, the subject being in a waking state, and without knowing it, the conscious mind is imperceptibly drawn upon, the result being a grotesque mixture of reason and absurdity, truth and falsehood, together with—if the subject be a clergyman—topsy-turvy religion and fantastic pseudo-sermons.

Is it surprising that some men and women, who play with and abuse their minds in this fashion, go mad?

PART IV

Telepathy or Thought Messages—Why Mediums at all?—Puerile Results of Many Spiritualist Manifestations—Spiritualist Messages from Heaven?

TELEPATHY OR THOUGHT MESSAGES.

THERE have been many authentic cases of persons who have declared that they saw the apparition of a relative, and have afterwards discovered that at that particular moment that relative died. This matter has received considerable attention from scientists, and I think it is now generally conceded—when it is not a mere coincidence—that probably a thought message has come from the dying person, and that this thought message has impressed itself so vividly on the brain of the recipient, that a subjective, sub-conscious image of the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

dying person has been formed on the retina of the recipient. Now you will particularly notice that in these recorded cases the message has come immediately before or at the time of death, never some time afterwards. Obviously, therefore, this thought message has nothing whatever to do with any communication from the spirit world.

The time is not far distant when thought message wave-lengths will be measured as easily and accurately as the present wireless telegraphy wave-lengths. Probably it will also be discovered that the key to the tuning of wave-lengths between two persons who wish to communicate will be found in suggestion or auto-suggestion—in other words, hypnotism or auto-hypnotism. This is not to say that we shall be able to run about reading everybody's thoughts. Thoughts and thought messages are two very different things, as different as thought and speech. Such a discovery, however, would finally convince everybody that

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

telepathy has nothing whatever to do with the spirit-world, but is as mundane as telegraphy.

The so-called thought-reading of the usual entertainers, in which some article is hidden, and the thought-reader, taking the hand of the hider, guides him or her to the object hidden, is not thought-reading at all. It is simply sub-conscious muscular action on the part of the hider, who deliberately leads the "thought-reader" to the object hidden. However, neither genuine thought-messages nor sub-conscious muscular action has anything whatever to do with the spirits.

I want to ask you an important question.

WHY MEDIUMS AT ALL ?

Why is it that a spirit does not communicate with a distressed relative on earth instead of through an utter stranger ? Spirits when they had an earthly existence probably never saw

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

nor heard of the medium through whom the alleged message came.

Now I ask you, is it at all likely that the medium, who makes it a trade to communicate with a host of stranger spirits, has a better knowledge of or is in closer touch with a spirit than the actual relative of that spirit? Think this carefully over.

PUERILE RESULTS OF MANY SPIRITUALIST MANIFESTATIONS.

When spiritualists are reminded of the puerile, silly, foolish, nay idiotic results of so many of their séances—tomfoolery which one might expect from a mischievous child or a lunatic—they admit all this, but say that people who have passed over to the other side are not all in the same “astral plane,” some are, in fact, spiritual babies and act as such. Other spiritualists say these stupidities are produced by “elemental spirits” inhabiting the astral plane, but not the spirits of humans—mischievous, lying,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

bad spirits, of whom there are hosts in the spiritual world. Comment is superfluous !

SPIRITUALIST MESSAGES FROM HEAVEN ?

Here are two typical instances of the direction in which spiritualism leads its votaries.

On December 14th, 1919, *The Weekly Dispatch* devoted a column to an interview with a Kent widow of good social standing. She stated that the spirit of her husband sent messages to her three times a day, and gave her ample descriptions of his life and experience after death.

Amongst other details he told her that heaven is a city of golden gates, and the buildings are of white marble which shines like crystal. He had a garden and cultivated flowers. In this garden was a fountain in which he intended to keep gold-fish. The inhabitants of heaven usually wear long white garments,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

but his were trimmed with a sort of violet. They neither sleep nor eat, except a little fruit occasionally. Neither do they work, their time being occupied with pleasure. Some of them are fond of practical jokes. Once a week sports are held, together with shooting at coloured balls thrown up into the air. After the sports a concert is held.

This lady also told the reporter that her husband informed her that he had met their old coachman, who had died two months before him. This old man was very fond of his glass of beer when on earth, but was disappointed that there was no beer in heaven. However, he was satisfied when they gave him a substitute which tasted very much like beer. Those who wished could smoke, but the tobacco in heaven was not to the taste of her husband, so he did not smoke.

These messages came by what is called "automatic writing" (see Part I.). As *The Weekly Dispatch* justly remarked:

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

“It is only possible to quote what she says without comment.”

Then take the more highly imaginative and lengthy automatically-written “messages” of the Rev. G. Vale Owen, Vicar of Orford, Lancashire, also published in *The Weekly Dispatch* in numerous instalments, each occupying a whole page in the newspaper, commencing February 1st, 1920. Up to the time of writing fifteen of these instalments have appeared.

Mr. Joseph McCabe, in a long review of these messages in *The Evening Standard* on the day after the first instalment appeared, said :—

“One is rather afraid to discuss this sort of thing seriously. Breaking butterflies with a steam-hammer would be a sensible pastime in comparison with a scientific analysis of this stuff.”

Be that as it may, the messages have had such an enormous circulation, and have been so greatly discussed all over

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the country, that I feel compelled to refer to them at some length.

Take the following passage published on February 8th, 1920 :—

“ Then there appeared an enormous rose of pink which slowly deepened into crimson, and all among its petals there were beautiful forms of children playing, and men and women standing or walking and talking together, handsome, beautiful and happy ; and fawns and antelopes and birds, running or flitting or lying among the petals, whose shapes swelled like hills and mounds and landscapes. Over these swells ran children with the animals, playing very happily and prettily. And then it all slowly faded away.”

I maintain that nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of every thousand who read the above would instantly recognise it as a sub-conscious human brain-impression of the transformation scene in an ordinary pantomime, even down to the usual theatrical properties

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

of changing limelights, and the petals of an enormous rose opening and disclosing beautiful figures, etc., behind them, and the whole gradually fading away. All very beautiful, no doubt, but obviously having about as much to do with the spirit world as the nursery rhymes of "Old Mother Hubbard" and "Three Blind Mice."

In another passage (February 29th, 1920) Mr. Owen writes:—

"When we had gone some way we entered a large square, where beautiful trees grew on lawns of the greenest of grass and fountains played a harmony together. That is to say, there were perhaps a dozen fountains, and each had a tone of its own, and each was composed of many smaller jets of water, each being a note. . . . The fountains were playing a simple series of chords, in perfect harmony, and with most pleasing effect."

There is nothing wonderful or supernatural in this. Probably any lecturer

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

on elementary popular science is in the habit of using jets of water, as well as all manner of other unlikely objects, such as flames, pieces of wood, glass bottles, metal tubes, etc., for producing musical sounds. I think I remember hearing such a lecture delivered in the Hall of the Mechanics' Institute in Ipswich (now a picture palace) more than fifty years ago, in which jets of water were made to produce musical sounds. Is this an instance of the sub-conscious mind at work, Mr. Owen ?

In the same instalment Mr. Owen gives a message from a resident of heaven who had visited "The Colony of Gloom" (a sort of purgatory or subsidiary hell). In this colony had lived for sixty years a man entitled to live in a high sphere, but who had volunteered to remain in the gloomy colony in order to help, one by one, the unfortunate inhabitants. The message continues :—

"I think I did not realise in fulness until then what it meant that a man

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

should lay down his life for his friends, aye ! and friends such as these, and to dwell with them in these regions of the shadow of death. He (the man referred to) saw me and understood some of what passed through my mind, and, taking my own shame upon himself, he said wistfully : ' So much He did for me, sir, so much and at so great cost.' And I said to him, taking his hand in mine : ' My brother, you have read us a lection of the very Book of God His love.' "

Anyone can see at a glance the origin of the above idea, pathetic and excellent as it is, it is simply that " Applied Christianity" which the Rev. Mr. Owen and his brother clergymen preach—or ought to preach—every Sunday. By the way, the word " lection" in the message is a purely clerical term meaning a portion of scripture read in divine service. No one but a clergyman would be likely to use such a term. It is singular how a very little thing—a single word—may sometimes form the clue to a mystery.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

In a message giving a description of the darker regions in the after-life—hells, real hells—an elaboration of detail is given to show that “a man continuing on ‘the other side’ from the stage of development he had reached on earth, may at death find himself advancing towards a more splendid life or descending towards a more restricted and gloomier one. That depends upon his own acts.”

Well, it does not require a special message from heaven to tell us this. Thousands of persons have been thinking and saying and writing exactly the same thing for many years past. Did your sub-conscious mind dictate this, Mr. Owen ?

Mr. Vale Owen, in more than one instalment, gives long messages purporting to come from “Leader,” describing the rescue of a large number of the inhabitants of the dark regions of hell, and their ultimate transfer to a colony where there is a possibility of their upward development. At the conclusion

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

(instalment of April 4th, 1920) this worthy entreats Mr. Owen to urge all and sundry to pray for the souls of these unfortunate beings.

There is nothing new or supernatural or wonderful in all this, for if Mr. Owen has not himself preached the doctrine of "prayers for the dead," he knows perfectly well that numbers of his fellow-clergymen have done so, and, curiously enough, *have used many very similar arguments* to those employed by "Leader," Mr. Vale Owen's correspondent in heaven !

In another instalment (April 11th, 1920) his correspondent in heaven descants at some length upon the difficulty which spirits experience in coming to earth to deliver their messages. He says: "As we proceed earthwards the brightness both of our environment and of our own persons also grows less and less, and by the time we reach the neighbourhood of earth we can but with difficulty see about us." It is, in fact, as if they were at the bottom of an almost

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

impenetrable sea. The message continues, "Bethink you, friend, how difficult it would be for one diver to speak audibly to another, both helmeted and with water between them; then you may realise how much of patience and steadfast endeavour on our part is needed, and you will perchance more readily give us a more patient hearing on your own."

Now this statement is really very curious. I wonder whether the following is the explanation. First, Mr. Vale Owen knows—in common with all men since the middle of the seventeenth century—that the whole human race is compelled to crawl about at the bottom of a dense sea of air; so dense at the earth's surface, that it presses with a weight of about fifteen pounds on every square inch.

Next, in blind reliance on memory only, his sub-conscious mind—which can neither reason nor argue—tells him to attribute to spirits in the after-life the same limitations of atmospheric

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

pressure as those which confront human beings on earth.

It strikes me forcibly that had Mr. Vale Owen's mind been under any other influence but that of his sub-conscious brain he would certainly have given the spiritual visitors credit for far greater power than he did.

Besides, why come to earth at all to deliver a message ? His sub-conscious mind must have quite forgotten that spirits ought to be able to send messages from heaven to earth without the unpleasant and inconvenient necessity of coming all the way to earth and floundering about in our dense sea of air ! Where is heaven's wireless telegraphy, and how about spiritual thought-messages, Mr. Owen ?

The fact is, it must be obvious to every reader of Mr. Vale Owen's "messages" that on this particular point the reverend gentleman's brain must have been in an inextricable tangle, in consequence of his chaotic confusion between earthly material and heavenly spiritual conditions.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

There is one curious circumstance in connection with these messages which I have not seen mentioned elsewhere, that is the remarkable similarity between some of Mr. Owen's descriptions and those of Swedenborg of the spirit world and its inhabitants.

In Mr. Owen's messages you will find specific references made to countries, colonies, cities, city walls, squares, palaces, houses, streets, gateways, gardens, terraces, colonnades, courtyards, roof-gardens, bridges, fountains, trees, hills, mountains, landscapes, ornaments, vases, jewels, gold, silver and precious stones, work of all kinds, building operations, etc.—all, mark you, as substantial, material and solid as on earth; in fact, a material earth transported to the spirit world.

Now read what Swedenborg wrote about the year 1756 (*The True Christian Religion, Supplement*, para. 794):—

“ From what I have been an eye-witness

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

of for so many years, I can assert the following facts relating to the spiritual world. In that world there are countries, just as in the natural world, and there are also plains and valleys, mountains and hills, fountains and rivers ; there are paradises, gardens, groves and forests ; there are cities containing palaces and houses ; there are also writings and books ; there are likewise employments and trading ; and there are gold, silver and precious stones ; in a word there are in the spiritual world all things which are in the natural world, but in heaven immeasurably more perfect."

There are many more similar descriptions in Swedenborg's writings.

Again, in a description of some children in the spirit-world Mr. Owen's correspondent in heaven mentions (instalment of February 29th, 1920) that they (the children) sometimes arrive in heaven weak, and require *bodily nourishment* for their proper development. He goes on to say :—

“ Although not of material flesh and

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

blood, yet our bodies here (in the spiritual world) are solid and real as those we have laid aside. . . . Now these little spirits are, most of them, only beginning to develop, and need bodily nourishment to help them on their way. Why not ? ”

If not of flesh and blood, why do they require bodily nourishment ?

In the same way Swedenborg ties himself up into knots (see *Supplement*, para. 793) :—

“ There is this difference between a man in the natural world and a man in the spiritual world (after death), that the latter is clothed with a substantial body, but the former with a material body, within which is his substantial body ; and a substantial man sees a substantial man as clearly as a material man sees a material man. A substantial man, however, cannot see a material man, nor can a material man see a substantial man, in consequence of the difference between material and substantial, the nature of

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

which difference may be described, but not in a few words."

I should think not! Obviously a distinction without a difference. For I find my dictionary gives, as one of the definitions of "substantial": "corporeal, material."

Also read extract in Part VI. from Swedenborg's description (para. 792) of men in heaven as eating, drinking, enjoying conjugal delights, etc.

The more one reads Swedenborg side by side with Vale Owen the more one is struck by the similarity between them, especially the constant tendency to cling closely to the most material of materialistic ideas, and the admixture of obvious imaginative absurdities with religion which characterise both of them. To realise fully this similarity, the reader has only to glance through Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell*, *On the Worlds in the Solar System*, and the *Supplement* to his *True Christian Religion*, paras. 792 to 851; then to read Vale Owen's page

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

instalments in *The Weekly Dispatch* for February 1st, 1920, and continuing every week for some months.

Please understand I make no allegation of plagiarism against the Rev. G. Vale Owen. I simply draw attention to the similarity and leave it at that.

“But,” the reader may argue, “while I have no hesitation in pronouncing the story of the Kentish lady a clear case of self-deception—just fancy! inferior tobacco and a beer substitute in heaven! shooting at coloured balls as a pastime! practical jokes by spirits!—there is something distinctly credible, probable, possible, even religious, in some of the Rev. Vale Owen’s ‘messages,’ although I must say a great deal of it is certainly very materialistic. May it not be right to reject one tale and accept at any rate part of the other tale?”

No, kindly-disposed reader! There can be no concession or compromise in such cases. You must either reject or accept the whole of both accounts. For

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

both the Kentish lady and Mr. Vale Owen have obtained their alleged messages by precisely the same method—automatic writing. They are evidently both honest, conscientious and thoroughly convinced that their respective messages came from spirits in heaven. No, I see no alternative but either to reject or accept in their entirety all these messages.

Up to the time of writing I have not seen a single sentence in all the voluminous messages which this clergyman alleges he has received from the spirit world—most of them, as I have remarked, thoroughly steeped in the materialism of earth—which on analysis could not be accounted for as the dream-produced, sub-conscious, brain-impression of an ordinary religious clergyman, who possessed a certain amount of high-strung imagination, and a smattering of elementary physical science. Of chimerical fantasy there is more than enough, but of any real spiritual knowledge which I should consider worth reading I can detect none.

I will go further, and will say that I

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

do not believe there is a single incident or detail, or fact or argument or illustration in the whole of Mr. Vale Owen's voluminous writings which could not be gathered from the storehouse of a well-read, intelligent clergyman's memoir of things which he had either read or seen or heard of during his past career.

A calm, unbiased consideration of all these alleged "spirit-messages" clearly shows, not only how closely they reflect the mentality of their writers, but also how easy it is for enthusiasts in the spiritualist cult to delude themselves with the belief—probably in all good faith on their part—that they are receiving messages from the spirits, and writing descriptions of the world after death. For all these messages contain unquestionable internal evidence that their origin is in the human brain and not in the land of spirits.

In a word, it is perfectly obvious to anyone possessing the smallest grain of common sense that the writers of these

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

so-called "automatic messages," without being aware of it, must be self-deceived.

In this connection also read Dr. Sidney R. Wilson's explanation regarding the sub-conscious mind at the end of Section "Various Opinions," Part VII.

Although the whole of the Rev. G. Vale Owen's "messages" have not yet been published, still up to the present time fifteen pages in *The Weekly Dispatch* have been devoted to the instalments. It is therefore only reasonable to conclude that this vast mass of matter provides quite sufficient basis upon which to comment and to form an opinion.

Since the foregoing was written, my attention has been drawn to the following, which appeared in the *Daily Mail* (March 27th, 1920) :—

"The Bishop of Liverpool (Dr. Chavasse), in whose diocese the Rev. G. Vale Owen's Parish of Orford is situated, yesterday condemned spiritualism, and attributed the 'Revelations beyond the Veil' to the activities of the sub-conscious mind.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

He was addressing a Lenten service for women at Warrington Parish Church.

“ ‘ We hear,’ he said, ‘ of people being suddenly constrained to write, and without any will of their own they say they write, what someone in the other world makes them write. I think that is due, without doubt, to the actions of the sub-conscious mind.

“ ‘ I believe that some of those who give to others revelations from the unseen world, coming or purporting to come from one or another of their friends who have passed through the veil, are simply giving to us what they have read or thought themselves or heard from others in days gone by.

“ ‘ When we read these revelations they condemn themselves. The life described and the conditions are completely different from those which we gather according to the Word of God. As we read these revelations we seem to catch the character and the very style of the persons who write them.’ ”

PART V

Clairvoyants and Fortune Tellers—Weak Points in Spiritualists' Evidence—Illusion—Hallucination—Spirit Photographs.

CLAIRVOYANTS AND FORTUNE TELLERS.

THERE is really very little to say about the large army of clairvoyants, crystal gazers, palmists and fortune-telling mediums, after the exhaustive exposure these individuals have had in the law courts in the past. Yet there is no doubt that their clients even now take them seriously. Herein lies the danger.

Preaching at Preston some years ago, Father Scholes said that he did not deny that people studying phrenology were able to form a pretty accurate opinion of character, and he had known delineations of handwriting that were correct.

Palmistry, however, was practised with

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the professed intention of forecasting the future. He read a letter from a leading fashionable palmist in London who had retired from the “profession,” not from fear of prosecution, but because she had joined the Church. She stated that eight out of ten persons who consulted palmists desired information about the future. Her married woman patrons generally inquired whether their husbands were likely to die ! It was the increased resort to spiritualism and to palmistry which was responsible for the growing paganism of the time.

Here is a tale of a clairvoyant “ Medium in the Mask.” A mystery—especially in connection with a lady — is always attractive to the public. After giving a number of private séances in London, a test séance was arranged to be given (April, 1919) in the Apollo Theatre by this masked medium, when a number of gentlemen interested in spiritualism were invited to attend. This test séance was intended to be followed by

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

public ones—which, however, never took place. Mr. Stuart Cumberland, who was present, writes as follows in his book, *Spiritualism—The Inside Truth* :—

“ I was invited to attend this test performance, and although no actual declaration was made that the results to be obtained were the outcome of supernatural power, the implication certainly was that it was not an ordinary show, dependent upon ordinary methods for its results ; and it was upon this basis that the invited audience accepted what was demonstrated.

“ It must not be forgotten that it was this masked medium’s claim to supernatural powers, and her true inward devotion to the spiritualistic cause, which was above reward, that caused the Committee, of which I had the privilege of being a member, to be formed for the purpose of investigation. I for one should not have given up time to investigating a professed sleight-of-hand show, as it indeed turned out to be,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

and I cannot fancy Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or any other member of the Committee similarly giving up time for the purpose.

“With others, I handed in a little prepared test, consisting of some writing placed in a sealed envelope. This writing was read with something approaching accuracy by the medium sitting on the stage; but when the envelope was returned to me it was still sealed, but on afterwards examining it I found *it had been opened*, presumably by a confederate in the wings, into whose possession it had been sleight-of-handed, unseen by the audience, and who had signalled the contents to the open-eyed medium. Other “tests” of this character, I discovered, had been similarly tampered with. And of such is professional clairvoyance !”

Probably the following is what actually happened :—

An attendant would go round collecting from the audience sealed envelopes

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

containing written sentences. He would then take them to the stage, and would apparently hand them to the medium. But instead of doing this, he would hand her some dummy envelopes which he had concealed, sleight-of-handing the original envelopes into his pocket. He could easily do this, as his back would be to the audience when he approached the medium. He would then quietly walk away, go behind the scenes, hand the original envelopes to a confederate there, who would open them, read the contents, and signal the written sentence in each to the medium from the wings, or some other place where she could see him, but where he was unseen by the audience.

Meanwhile some preliminaries would take place on the part of the medium to give sufficient time for the above operations to be completed. The medium would then take the dummy envelopes which she held in her hand one by one, place them against her forehead, and, with a certain amount of hesitation

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

—to mystify the audience—would repeat the sentences signalled to her. Of course to do this efficiently it would be necessary for the medium to have had a considerable amount of practice, to enable her to memorise a number of written sentences.

This part of the performance finished, the attendant would walk up to the medium, having the original envelopes—which meantime had been sealed up again—concealed on him, receive from her the dummies, sleight-of-hand them into his pocket, substitute for them the originals—all with his back to the audience—and then coolly walk down from the stage and hand the original envelopes to their respective owners—the whole an exceedingly simple and easy conjuring trick.

In his account of this séance Mr. Stuart Cumberland goes on to say:—

“ Although the touching affection the masked medium professed to have for the idealities of spiritualism prevented her from claiming the *Sunday Express*’s

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

(under whose auspices this test séance was held) monetary offer for the production of a *bona-fide* spook, there should be nothing to prevent her from gaining a big fat fee for a convincing proof of her alleged clairvoyant powers. This sum I am willing to give to her or any other seer who can clairvoyantly read the contents of a sealed envelope under conditions which would render impossible collusive assistance or the employment of trickery. In a word, the contents must be read by the seer direct, the envelope never once leaving my possession, or be for a moment out of my control. O ye seers, afford me this one proof of your supernatural powers, and gladly will I pay the piper!"

So far as I am aware, this offer has never been accepted. But it has since been reported in the public press (see the *Daily Mail*, March 13th, 1920) that the *impresario* of this medium openly acknowledged that the whole of this particular performance was conjuring,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

and had nothing to do with the supernatural.

In connection with the above, Mr. Stuart Cumberland writes me (April 7th, 1920) :—

“ I congratulate you on the attitude you are adopting in combating the pernicious evils of spiritualism. You may add that the masked medium, like others of her class, did not always adopt the same methods of deception. Apropos of this, as I explained to Chief Justice Darling the other day, when the case in connection with her came before him, ‘ There are various ways of painting the *rara avis*, but it remains the same old sparrow all the time.’ ”

WEAK POINTS IN SPIRITUALISTS’ EVIDENCE.

In examining the statements of spiritualists dispassionately, it will be found that there are generally three weak points in the evidence brought

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

forward by them in support of their cause—

1. Defects of observation.
2. Defects of recording the evidence.
3. Second-hand or hearsay evidence.

In reviewing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's book, *The Coming World*, the *Daily Mail* says: "The evidence is not such as science would accept, and is based almost entirely on second-hand statements." Now second-hand evidence, as any lawyer will tell you, is not evidence at all. You can easily prove this by a popular parlour game.

Get a few friends, ten or a dozen, to sit in a row of chairs in your room. Give the one on the first chair a short, written statement containing a few simple, clear facts, such as the following:—

"A friend living next door but two to the corner house at the third turning on the left knows a man whose wife's cousin has red hair, grey eyes and a yellow complexion."

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

When he has read it carefully once or twice he must return it to you, and after he has waited ten or a dozen seconds he must whisper the statement to his next neighbour. Let the statement be passed on from memory in this way, without anyone but the first person seeing the written statement, till it has reached the person sitting on the last chair, then get him to write down the facts which his neighbour has told him. Finally, read out the two written statements and you will be astounded to find, in their transmission through a chain of several persons, how the original facts have been distorted, altered, forgotten or even entirely new facts introduced.

ILLUSION.

An illusion is when you certainly hear or see something, but your excited or disordered imagination makes it look or sound very different from what it really is. In examining spiritualism the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

question of illusion must always be carefully kept in mind.

For instance, you walk through a country churchyard at night, and you fancy you see a ghost, which keeps raising and lowering its arms in warning of your impending doom. Stifling your terror and approaching the ghost, you find it is a donkey which nods its head and ears up and down. This is an illusion.

No haunted house has ever yet produced a noise or a ghostly vision which, on investigation, could not be accounted for by some very ordinary cause, such as cats padding about at night, rats scratching and scampering behind panelling, wind blowing articles about, air passing through empty water pipes, naughty persons who produce noises or sights for revenge or practical jokes, caretakers who wish to keep the haunted house empty, or shadows or reflections thrown by neighbouring lamps, trees or other objects. As history has amply proved, spiritualism abounds in illusions.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Another characteristic feature of spiritualism is—

HALLUCINATION.

The morbid, excited imagination impresses on the retina or the ear an object or a sound *which has no existence at all*. This is hallucination, may indicate a grave mental condition and the precursor of insanity. For instance, in a country churchyard at night you see what you think is a ghost, but on approaching it it disappears. There was nothing there to suggest it. This is hallucination.

Besides excitement or a disordered imagination, hallucination can easily be produced artificially by certain poisons passed into the blood and thence to the brain. Alcohol taken to excess will produce horrible visions of snakes and reptiles (delirium tremens). Opium will produce ecstatic visions. Hashish or Indian hemp more wonderful visions still. The ancient Egyptians were

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

accustomed to summon up demons by administering poisons to their votaries.

In many cases it has been proved that spiritualists see visions and hear voices when all the time they are suffering from hallucinations, as will be seen later on in the case of Swedenborg. Of course, the victims of this disease give the entire credit to the spirits.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS.

As evidence confirming their contention that they can call up spirits and make them visible, the mediums will show you the actual photographs of spirits. A photograph cannot lie, can it?

Knowing that spirits are invisible, if you ask a medium how they can be photographed, he will tell you that the "astral entity" which is willing to have its photograph taken—you cannot do so without its kind permission—has to diffuse itself with "etheric matter," otherwise the plate is not sensitive to the spirit. The fact is, it is perfectly easy

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

for any photographer to produce spirit photographs in a great variety of ways —when he knows how! Here is one method.

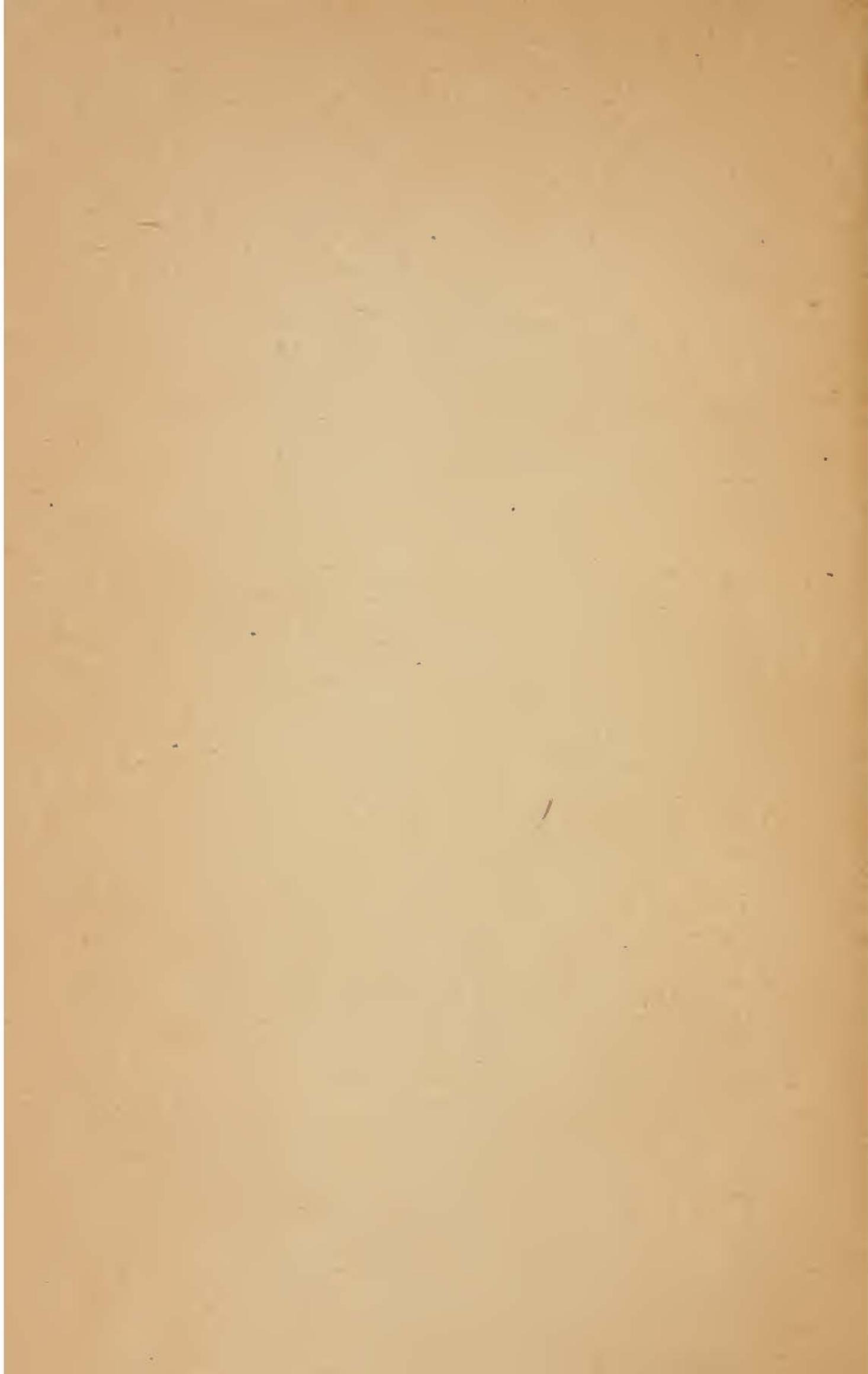
The group and surroundings are arranged with the spirit draped in its white diaphanous dress in its proper place. The lens of the camera is then uncapped, only a quarter of the necessary exposure given, then recapped. Everything else remaining perfectly still, the "spirit" moves out of the picture, when the remaining three-quarters of the exposure is given without the "spirit." In the resulting photograph the spirit comes out very hazy. In fact, you can see through the spirit—in more ways than one.

In another perfectly simple and easy manner I have myself on more occasions than one produced a spirit photograph on a sensitive plate, which has been placed in a sealed box, without either opening the box, tampering with the seals, or exposing the plate!

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

As one who has made amateur photography a hobby for many years, allow me to warn the reader against accepting as genuine any "spirit photograph" shown him. I can assure him that the tricks are simply innumerable by which photographs may be faked in all sorts of ways, and double, multiple and other misleading exposures made. A sensitive plate has before now been made to receive an image when one would have thought it impossible for a single ray of light to have affected the plate.

In fact, so unreliable do I consider any photograph to which is attached the slightest taint of spiritualism, that when in this connection I have been asked, "Can a photograph lie?" I have frequently replied, "A 'spirit photograph' is absolutely unable to speak the truth."



PART VI

Madame Blavatsky—Oriental Magic—Emanuel Swedenborg.

MADAME BLAVATSKY.

THEOSOPHY has been so identified with modern spiritualism, that no book on the latter would be complete without a few notes regarding Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, who founded the Theosophical Society.

This she did in 1875, in conjunction with Colonel H. S. Olcott, with the following objects: (1) To establish a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity; (2) to promote the study of comparative religion and philosophy; (3) to investigate systematically the mystic potencies of life and matter. These objects were very good in

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

themselves, for theosophy (from two Greek words, “theos” God and “sophia” wisdom), a quite commendable philosophy, which treats of a more intimate relation of the soul with God, has been the subject of investigation for thousands of years. But not content with the above laudable objects, Madame Blavatsky overlaid this philosophy with a curious mixture of modern spiritualism, Egyptian and Indian cabalistic occultism, and Thibetian Mahatma absurdities, obscuring the whole with the weird terminology of the East.

She certainly had a chequered career. Her wanderings in various countries were numerous and peculiar, and she was not always a *persona grata* with the authorities, from whom at times she received an intimation that her absence was more to be desired than her presence.

She was originally regarded by her fellow spiritualists as a medium of by no means high order. Miss Maud Collins, who was formerly her intimate

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

associate and co-editor of the Theosophical print *Lucifer*, wrote of her :—

“She taught me one great lesson. I learned from her how foolish, how ‘gullible,’ how easily flattered human beings are, taken *en masse*. She had a greater power over the weak and credulous, a greater capacity for making black appear white, and a greater contempt for the intelligence of her fellow-beings than I had ever supposed possible to be contained in one person.”

Without going minutely into her history, suffice it to say that after many wanderings she found herself in India, where her teachings were accepted with avidity.

From India came strange reports of the wonderful miracles performed by her in conjunction with the “Mahatmas,” or Masters, with whom she alleged she was now in close communion—those mythical, mystic astral beings to whom the hidden forces of nature were fully and exclusively revealed. (By the way,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Madame was subsequently reported to have said that she invented the Mahatmas for the benefit of the credulous.)

Amongst other miracles, it was said that the Mahatmas were frequently known to send down from heaven messages on pieces of paper.

These reports became so insistent and astounding, that in 1885 the Psychical Research Society arranged to send Mr. Hodgson to investigate the genuineness of these miracles. Meantime, however, there had been treachery in the Theosophical ranks, and the Colombs, confidants of Madame, gave away the whole show.

Mr. Hodgson went to India, very carefully investigated the statements which the Colombs had made, came home and reported that the wonderful occult manifestations were simply the old Western exposed and discredited spiritualist tricks dished up under a new guise and with a new name.

Other investigators who went to India

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

to examine the alleged mysteries for themselves, discovered the way in which Madame worked the various Mahatma miracles, notably the famous one of dropping messages from the clouds. These messages were written on pieces of paper fastened in clips attached to tree-tops, under which visitors were induced, by plausible excuses, to sit. Strings were attached to the clips and pulled at the right moment, when the "messages" fluttered down on the visitors' heads. Of course, the mythical Mahatmas, or astral forces, or spirits had about as much to do with the messages as you had who read these pages.

Although the fraudulent character of Madame Blavatsky's occult phenomena were exposed in the most conclusive manner by several painstaking investigators, her cleverness, her volubility and her pertinacity enabled her to hold her own with a certain class of credulous persons to such an extent that when she died on May 8th, 1891, she was the

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

acknowledged head of adherents numbering not far short of 100,000 persons, with journalistic organs in London, Paris, New York, and Madras.

So much for Madame Blavatsky and her wonderful Mahatmas.

ORIENTAL MAGIC.

Madame Blavatsky, however, was not the only spiritualist who has exploited Indian jugglery to bolster up the cause. Countless attempts have been and are being made to prove that Indian fakirs are far ahead of us in occult magic, and are in direct communication with spirit forces, which enable them to perform feats which are not far removed from miracles, all of which has been adduced as confirmatory of the claims of spiritualists.

The most famous instance of this kind is the widely-advertised "Indian Rope Trick." As usually described, it is performed in the open air, in broad daylight, surrounded by spectators, in

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the following manner. An Indian fakir, naked except for a loin-cloth, whose only properties are a rope, a mat to stand upon, and a small boy, will hold the rope by one end and throw the remainder into the air, where it will remain fixed. The small boy will then climb up the rope and disappear, the rope will come tumbling down, and the small boy will be seen running towards the spectators from some little distance. Such is the story as told. A veritable miracle ! How is it performed ?

It is true that photographs have been produced by persons who have alleged that they have been present when the trick was performed. Some of these photographs show nothing except the juggler on his mat with the rope at his feet. Other photographs show the juggler holding up a long, slight rod, with the small boy clinging to the top, such rod being considerably bent, obviously by the weight of the boy. This proves nothing ; for it would not be

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

impossible to construct a light, collapsible telescopic rod, capable when shut up of being hidden in the mat, and with one throw jerked out to its fullest extent, up which a small boy might climb.

It is needless to say that if an Indian juggler could be brought to Europe, and could perform this trick as originally described, he would be able to earn an income which would be beyond the dreams of even Oriental avarice.

Managers of professional entertainers, as well as several eminent men from England and other countries, have systematically scoured the East from end to end, fortified with letters of introduction to many Eastern potentates and British officials, in a vain endeavour to find such a juggler. Not one has ever been discovered.

Here is another astounding trick which I have not seen mentioned of late, but accounts of which I read about forty years ago in more than one periodical. All these accounts alleged that travellers

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

in India had actually seen the trick performed.

In this case the only properties the fakir had were a small table and a cloth containing a lump of moist clay.

He would place his table in a prominent position in the town or village, and when a sufficient number of spectators had assembled, would put the lump of clay on one corner of the table. Then he would proceed to mould with the hands a number of small clay men each about two inches high. Placing these clay men on the centre of the table, he would throw his cloth over them. In a few seconds he would gently remove the cloth, when the little figures would be seen walking about as if they were alive. He would tell them to march and perform various antics, all of which they would obediently do. Then he would separate them into two companies and would order them to fight each other. A fierce battle would ensue, during which little clay heads and arms would be

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

seen to fall from the miniature combatants. At the height of the mêlée he would suddenly sweep the little clay figures together with his hands and crush them all on to the lump of clay. Collecting the coins from the astonished and mystified spectators, he would put the clay in the cloth, shoulder his table, and march off to the next village.

Fancy the sensation such a trick would cause if performed in London in the year 1920 !

For years I have been anxiously awaiting some corroboration of this trick, but hitherto without success.

Long, long ago Mr. J. N. Maskelyne, and later others have explained and exposed all the best known Indian juggling tricks, and one would have thought such an exposure would have entirely killed the "Indian Magic" superstition and all the occult rubbish connected with it. But it has not.

One still sees, popping up in the Press at intervals, allegations that the Indian

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

rope trick, or human levitation, or other occult Oriental magic has recently been witnessed by some problematical traveller in the East.

In a previous section (Table-lifting and Human Levitation, Part II.) I have dealt with the alleged Oriental juggling feat of making human bodies float in the air without any visible means of support.

The fact is, Indian magic has been much exaggerated. Travellers' tales—witness Baron Münchhausen—an active imagination, "hearsay" evidence, the tale recounted some considerable time after the event, a desire on the part of the traveller to render his tale thrilling, the sub-conscious effect of Oriental surroundings and atmosphere, the notorious Oriental imagery, all have tended to throw a glamour of mystery round what has subsequently proved to be commonplace, crude tricks. Of all this modern spiritualists have not been slow to take full advantage.

Some of the most promising of Indian

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

jugglers and snake charmers have certainly been brought to Europe, but with exceedingly disappointing results. For, taken out of their Oriental environment, the tricks of these men have fallen very flat.

In any case, it has never yet been proved that Eastern jugglers have been capable of performing anything but second or third-rate conjuring tricks, much less tricks which gave the slightest sign of mystic, occult, spirit origin.

EMANUEL SWEDENBORG.

A short notice of Swedenborg is necessary, as it has already been mentioned that his writings practically formed the commencement of modern spiritualism. Comment has already been made upon some of his writings in the Section "Spiritualist Messages from Heaven?" Part IV.

Up to 58 years of age (1743) he was a normal man, with a brilliant and extremely intellectual mind. But he

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

then stated that the Lord had opened his eyes, and enabled him to converse with spirits and angels. He became a ghost-seer, had waking dreams, visions and hallucinations, and ultimately it was quite evident that he was the victim of serious mental disease.

I hold the opinion that Swedenborg, unconsciously, has done more, logically and consistently, to expose the false character of modern spiritualism than any other man, for the following reasons. While subsequent pretenders have been satisfied to obtain alleged messages from spirits through mediums or automatic writing, Swedenborg has gone one better, for he claims to have actually visited the spirit world, seen things there with his own eyes, conversed with the denizens of heaven, and returned to earth to write a most minute record of his journeyings "beyond the veil."

Besides the numerous writings which he published, a manuscript was found in Stockholm, evidently written by him

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

either in 1743 or 1744, entitled *A Diary, or Book of Dreams*. This is, or was, in the Royal Library at Stockholm, but as it was alleged that a great portion of it was unfit for publication, only a limited number of copies were allowed to be printed.

It would be laughable, if it were not sad, to read how he claimed to have visited the planet Mercury, where men wore garments of deep blue, fitted tightly to the body, without frills or folds. Of his alleged residence in Mars, where he found the inhabitants living on fruit and pulse, and having for clothing the fibrous bark of trees woven and stiffened with gum. Also of his journey to Jupiter, and the wonderful herds of wild horses he saw there.

It is a significant fact that Swedenborg never refers, in all his wanderings amongst the stars, to any planets except those which were known to astronomers in his time !

In the supplement to his *True Christian*

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Religion he claims (para. 796) to have conversed frequently with Luther, Melancthon and Calvin, as well as many other eminent men and women long since dead, also with many of his friends and relatives. He tells you their complete history after death, what they wore and what they did. He also conversed (para. 827) with Mary, the mother of our Lord.

He claimed to be familiar with both heaven and hell as spiritual kingdoms, from one end to the other. Yet so ignorant was he of the faintest conception of true spirituality, and so steeped was he in materialism, that he writes (para. 792) :—

“ A man after death is as much a man as he was before, and so completely such, that he does not know but that he is still living in the former world ; for he sees, hears and speaks as in the former world ; he walks, runs and sits as in the former world ; he lies down, sleeps and wakes as in the former world ; he eats

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

and drinks as in the former world ; he enjoys conjugal delight as in the former world ; in a word, he is, in all and every respect, a man. From these circumstances it is evident that death is not an extinction but a continuation of life, and consequently that it is only a passage from one state to another."

Further (in para. 832) he says he visited the Mahomedan Colony in heaven, where the inhabitants "*live virtuously with several wives !*" He somewhat qualifies this astounding statement, however, by acknowledging that the Mahomedan gentlemen who have the privilege of possessing several wives live in an "*inferior heaven,*" whereas those individuals who renounce concubinage live in a "*superior heaven !*"

To suit this peculiarity, it appears that the Mahomedan heaven—unlike that which he says is inhabited respectively by the "*Dutch, English, Germans, Papists, Romish Saints, Africans and Jews,*" each of whom have several paragraphs

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

devoted to them—is divided into two parts !

Curiously enough, while he says he met Louis XIV. and George II. in heaven, he found King David and St. Paul the apostle in the infernal regions !

By this time I really think that any reasonably - minded reader, with the smallest modicum of common sense, will have made up his mind that Swedenborg was eminently successful in reducing modern spiritualist pretensions to a ridiculous absurdity and spiritualism itself to a farce.



PART VII

Various Opinions—Statistics—Does Spiritualism emanate from Satan?—What Result has Spiritualism to show?

VARIOUS OPINIONS.

THE ordinary opinion of the average "man in the street," who probably has no special knowledge of this abstruse subject, is naturally worth very little. But it is distinctly of advantage to ascertain the opinions of well-known eminent and scientific men, many of whom have made spiritualism a life study. Here are a few such opinions.

The late MR. J. N. MASKELYNE referred to spiritualism as a "gigantic imposture"

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

and a “drama of deceit” and wrote (see page 183 of *The Supernatural?*) : —

“ There does not exist, and there never has existed, a professed ‘ medium ’ of any note who has not been convicted of trickery or fraud. This is a sweeping assertion to make, but it is nevertheless an indisputable fact. It is the old story retold, the story of ‘ Duplicity feeding upon Folly.’ It is a doctrine, cradled in credulity and fostered by fraud, which teaches, and professes to prove, that the spirits of those departed can be brought again into material contact with those still upon earth.”

His son, MR. NEVIL MASKELYNE, writes (in the *Daily Mail*, February 26th, 1919) : —

“ I have attended the séances of many mediums, but have never found one who convinced me. I have also arranged the conditions for many séances, and at not one of those séances has any manifestation ever taken place. My father and

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

I got so tired of arranging tests for the late Mr. W. T. Stead that we fixed up a test which should always be in readiness. We put a piece of chalk between two clean slates, fastened the slates together with solder, and marked them. Stead sent many mediums to try their powers with those slates, but no message ever appeared.

“At one séance Stead locked the door and put the key in his pocket. The séance lasted two hours and nothing happened. The next day Stead found the key in his pocket. He had not unlocked the door, yet everyone had got out of the room! But Stead still believed in that medium!

“The exposure of mediums is usually a very easy but very thankless job, because after you have shown a spiritualist that his medium has tricked him, he goes off and believes in another medium who does the same thing.”

A very interesting interview of MR. H. G. WELLS, entitled *Why I do not*

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

believe in Spiritualism, appeared in *The Strand Magazine* (April, 1920). Amongst other reasons, Mr. Wells says :—

“ The scientist, the professor, the student deep in his speciality, have always been the easy prey of cheats. What chance has a man who has spent his days in a laboratory to detect the expert cheating of a Palladino, trained as she had been from childhood as a professional trickster ? A scientist’s training makes him a good judge of, say, the nature and the behaviour of chemical elements ; not of sleight-of-hand. Of that sort of thing you or I or any other man picked out at random is as good a judge as the greatest physicist on earth. And a third-rate magician producing rabbits and flowers out of a borrowed hat can mystify any of us with more ‘miracles’ than the most gifted ‘medium.’ ”

“ Only we at the magician’s show are not fundamentally deceived. We know that we are being hoodwinked ; and

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the magician makes no pretence that his rabbits and flowers actually come to life in the hat, whereas your 'medium' and your scientist who has wandered from his laboratory into the séance-room take their 'phenomena' seriously."

MR. STUART CUMBERLAND writes (see his book, *Spiritualism — The Inside Truth*) :—

"All my life I have been out to find something to which a purely supernatural origin could be applied as regards spiritualism, and up to the present time (May, 1919) I have seen nothing which was not explicable on a mundane basis.

"So long as the proper precautions are not taken, due observations made and logical deductions applied in connection with so-called supernatural phenomena, so long will there be the underlying belief that, say what one will, there may be that 'something in it' which goes far to make imposture easy and the acceptance of occurrences as

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

supernatural, when, as a matter of fact, the natural would be found to cover every one of them."

MR. MAX PEMBERTON, in a review of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's book, *The New Revelation*, writes :—

" It was my task last year to spend some six months investigating the claims of certain spiritualistic leaders, to read the books they named to me, and to hear Sir Arthur himself give his famous lecture. I studied with what closeness I could that immense treatise on *Human Personality* written by the late F. W. H. Myers, and I must have read scores of other books and pamphlets.

" None of these convinced me that this tremendous claim (the possibility of communicating with departed spirits) could be established. Never upon any occasion have I received any communication which allowed me to believe that I had been talking with a dead person.

" Many earnest people I saw whose

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

gifts of self-deception were incontestable ; many astounding things were told to me, but none which bore the impress of an eternal truth from a world beyond. Triviality there was, talk of mundane hopes and fears ; of the things we know or have known ; shrewd guesses and preposterous quackery. But the 'vanished hand' did not touch my own, nor did I hear the voice which was still."

DR. MAUDSLEY, the great mental specialist and author of various works on the relation of the body to the mind, referring to spiritualism, ascribes the reasons for this leaning to the supernatural to two great causes :—

1. Natural defects and errors of observation and reasoning.
2. The activity of the imagination.

MR. COULSON KERNAHAN, in a book on the subject, writes :—

"Spiritualism seems to me to move only in, and never out of a circle, and

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

that we might as well hope to journey to the stars by riding in some country fair or village 'roundabout,' as to hope by means of spiritualism to wrest from Omnipotence the secrets which Omnipotence has wisely withheld.

"Compared even with the revelation of God in nature—the sea, the dawn, the midnight sky—spiritualism seems to me not far removed from the same village fair—belaboured drum, smoking and flaring naphtha lights and all."

DR. HAYDN BROWN, the eminent London nerve specialist, recently told the Magic Circle (a society of professional conjurors) that spiritualism and spiritualistic séances were very risky things for the human mind, and that would-be believers attended them at their peril.

In a subsequent interview he said :—

"This great wave of spiritualism, which I consider a great wave of mental disorder, must be fought. Who is to oppose

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

it ? I contend that the final answer must come from advanced psychologists. Up to the present they have not taken up the attitude they ought to have adopted, but I trust they will in future do all they can to prevent, and encourage the prevention of, mental disorder. To do this they will have to combat spiritualism.

“ Many people declare themselves mediums because they are egoistic and anxious to pose as something superior to their fellow-creatures. I doubt if many of the mediums really believe they receive messages from the dead. Those who do believe it I should consider mentally disordered.

“ Isn’t it worth remembering that people like Sir Oliver Lodge, on whom we could rely if they were the mediums themselves, have all to admit with regret that ‘ they haven’t the gift ’ ? They have to rely on some third person, often enough an illiterate man or woman who has never given a moment’s thought to the problems of eternity.”

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

COLONEL R. H. ELLIOTT, the well-known medical specialist and Chairman of the Spiritualistic Investigation Committee of the Magic Circle, said :—

“ There is a general idea that because a number of eminent scientists have adopted spiritualism the case is proved. We reject that emphatically. Because a man is an expert in one line there is no reason for supposing he is expert in another.”

In a “ warning message ” to *The Daily Sketch* he says :—

“ Spiritualism is fostering an increase of insanity in this country, and well-known people, whether clergymen or men of science or literature, who lend their names to this kind of movement are taking a very serious responsibility. It is a national work to stop the kind of thing that is going on, and to get the people back to sanity.

“ There are some people who deliberately deceive, then there are those,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

including some distinguished people, who want to be deceived, and a certain number who attain notoriety by being deceived. Notoriety to some people is far more important than money, and it is no argument in favour that the person promising disclosures refuses payment."

Regarding the above Investigating Committee of the Magic Circle, Colonel Elliott claims that they are the very best people to discover whether there is any fraud being committed. Composed of men whose business it is to practise allowable deceit, they would be the first people to spot any fraud.

CANON EDMUND McCLURE, in his address to the Church Congress at Leicester on October 15th, 1919, said :—

"One would naturally think that the exposure of medium after medium would have brought this superstition to an end, but as Professor Jacks (a former President of the Psychical Research

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Society) said at a meeting in June last, 'if a person has once committed himself to the statement that he believes in spirits, he would fight to the last ditch until every vestige of regard for facts had been thrown to the winds.'

"In face of all the difficulties, frauds, and absurdities, there were still some people who held the opinion of Browning's 'Mr. Sludge the Medium,' that there was 'something in it,' tricks and all. What was this something? There were several answers to this. Whatever they were, it was a danger to the mental sanity of the nation that neurotic persons should be accepted as channels between the living and the dead."

DR. SIDNEY R. WILSON, an eminent Manchester doctor, formerly in the Physiological Department of Manchester University, in lecturing to the Chorlton Literary Society on the action of the sub-conscious mind, as reported in the *Evening Standard*, February 2nd, 1920, said :—

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

“ Every Christian believes in a future state, in the immortality of the soul ; but if you ask me to believe in a spirit continually at the beck and call of table-rappers and automatic writers, such a spiritualism is wrong. The law of the sub-conscious brain is suggestion.

“ A spiritualist medium is a physiological curiosity, whose sub-conscious brain is bigger than the normally-controlling super-granular layer. With the exception of this super-granular layer, or conscious brain, all the nerve cells acted according to automatic or reflex action.

“ The laws controlling these actions have been very fully worked out by Professor Sherrington, who showed that in the nervous system there was a common path which could only be occupied by one message at a time. Sherrington’s laws were equally applicable to the sub-conscious brain. If the controlling or argumentative layer of the brain were sent to sleep, the sub-conscious brain

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

would, with mathematical accuracy, respond to suggestions, and all kinds of abnormal phenomena could be produced to order.

“The sub-conscious brain was not logical. Any message put to it was taken as the truth, even if it were a falsehood. It was possible to inhibit the conscious brain and to leave open the common path of the sub-conscious brain. In this state any suggestion made was accurately fulfilled, irrespective of conviction or argument.”

Dr. Wilson, by means of practical illustration upon members of the audience, showed how, when the conscious brain was stilled, the sub-conscious brain reproduced all the different kinds of “spiritualistic” phenomena.

Upon it being suggested to some persons sitting round a table that they could see the lecturer rising out of the table, they leaned back with every symptom of wonder and surprise in their faces, as the “materialisation” took

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

place, although there was nothing material there.

One of the subjects wrote a sentence in Latin, a language with which he was totally unacquainted.

The sub-conscious brain of another recalled an incident he had entirely forgotten and transmitted it to paper. The externalisation of insensibility was illustrated, the subject being impervious to the effect of a drawing-pin pushed into his wrist !

Another recent opinion—that of DR. CHAVASSE, Bishop of Liverpool—will be found at the end of Part IV.

What does RUDYARD KIPLING say on the matter ?

“ Whispers shall comfort us out of the dark—

Hands—ah God !—that we knew !

Visions and voices—look and hark !—

Shall prove that our tale is true,

And that those who have passed to the further shore

May be hailed—at a price—on the road to En-dor.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

“ But these are so deep in their new eclipse,
Nothing they say can reach—
Unless it be uttered by alien lips
And framed in a stranger’s speech.

The son must send word to the mother that bore
Through an hireling’s mouth. ’Tis the rule of
En-dor.

“ Oh ! The road to En-dor is the oldest road
And the craziest road of all !
Straight it runs to the witch’s abode,
As it did in the days of Saul,
And nothing has changed of the sorrow in store
For such as go down on the road to En-dor ! ”

STATISTICS.

To show how great a hold spiritualism has on the British public, it is estimated that at the present time, besides the 240 Lyceum Unions, with a membership of 24,000, already referred to, there is the Spiritualist National Union, comprising 370 Societies, with a membership of about 30,000. This Union is chiefly confined to the Midlands and the North. Then there is the London Spiritualist

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

Alliance, with a roll of 1,500. There are, in addition, not affiliated to the above, innumerable independent societies, spiritualist missions holding regular services, and investigating groups all over the country, besides thousands of ardent spiritualists who do not belong to any Society, but read and absorb with avidity literature favourable to spiritualism.

In fact, the extent of the present-day spiritualist movement may be compared to that of some of the great religious revivals of the past.

DOES SPIRITUALISM EMANATE FROM SATAN ?

Some quite religious people, who have been mystified by spiritualism, and, without understanding it, consider "there is something in it," have told me they believe we can communicate with the spirit world, but that this is wicked, the black art, one of the wiles of Satan. Now while I cannot believe that mere tricks

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

of sleight-of-hand, sleight-of-mind, hypnotism or even telepathy emanate from Satan, it is not advisable to reject the possibility that the Evil One may employ this false spiritualism to distract and divert the minds of men and women from the true spiritualism of spirituality.

Think this point over carefully. It is worth serious consideration.

WHAT RESULT HAS SPIRITUALISM TO SHOW ?

Mr. Nevil Maskelyne, in his Introduction, and Dr. Haydn Brown, Colonel R. H. Elliott and Canon McClure, in their opinions already recited, have indicated their firm impression that modern spiritualism has been responsible for insanity on the part of its votaries. To confirm this I annex a few typical instances which I have extracted from various newspapers, showing a few of the sorrowful and tragical results of modern spiritualism in the past.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

A wealthy San Francisco woman, who previously had been exceptionally strong-minded, came in contact with a notorious occultist who had addresses in New York, London and Paris. She took his predictions and warnings so seriously that they produced a pitiable effect. On one occasion she actually crossed from New York to Paris to consult him. Acute hysteria and neurasthenia were the immediate result, followed by the most grotesque eccentricities. When the report of her case appeared in the paper she was mentally and physically a wreck.

A Mrs. Cusworth, of Castleford, in Yorkshire, the middle-aged wife of a commercial traveller, committed suicide by cutting her throat with a carving knife. The husband ultimately found a number of fortune-telling letters addressed to his wife. At the inquest it was conclusively shown that she had

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

been worried out of her mind by what a clairvoyant and spiritualist had told her.

A wealthy couple at Zurich, under the influence of spiritualism, fell into such a state of nervousness that they fancied they were followed by spirits who walked about at night.

Matters reached such a climax at last that their daughter, a girl of eighteen, disappeared one night during a séance. Finally her body was discovered floating in a lake. In her pocket was a letter saying that she had committed suicide because she could no longer stand the strain. The mother ultimately became insane.

Here is the story of a tragedy at Marly, near Paris. A Madame Chappuis lost her husband and was grief-stricken. Being now rich, the poor widow attracted

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

the attention of a spiritualist medium, named Madame Martin. After several séances, in which the medium gave numerous "messages" from the husband's spirit to his widow, the latter's death was foretold on a certain day, which naturally came true. The medium had previously induced the widow, by pretended spirit messages from her husband, to will all her property to the medium.

When the will came to be proved the whole thing came to light, the medium was arrested, tried and sentenced to four years' imprisonment and a fine.

An action for fraud was brought by Mrs. Hannah Richter, of New York, against a man named Frank Horowitz, who she alleged told her that he was the confidant of no fewer than forty spirits, who could do her harm or good according to the amount of cash she paid them. In all, she said, £220 went to propitiate the band.

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

On one occasion Horowitz is stated to have told her daughter to put £10 in a drawer and turn round three times. The money vanished, and he solemnly answered that the spirits had taken it.

When Mrs. Richter threatened to sue him, Horowitz, she alleged, told her that if she did so she and the judge who tried the case would drop dead in court.

On April 19th, 1920, the London newspapers reported that on the previous day, Sunday, Dr. James Markoe, a well-known surgeon, while taking a collection in a New York Church in an aristocratic part of the city, was shot and killed by a man named Thomas W. Simkins, who was stated to have escaped from a lunatic asylum. The report further alleged that "his mind became affected through the study of spiritualism."

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

A quite recent tragic example of the use—or rather abuse—of “planchette” is also given at the end of Part I.

After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

What result has spiritualism to show?

Has it ever added one iota to our stock of spiritual knowledge?

Has it ever given anything ennobling or of real benefit to mankind?

Has it ever let the smallest real light into the conditions prevailing in the spiritual world?

Has it ever given a single alleged message from the spirit world which it is beyond the power of any ordinary, intelligent, imaginative human being to speak or to write?

Has not spiritualism, when regarded dispassionately and analysed, been found

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

to be crammed with materialistic, corporeal ideas, essentially of the earth earthy, and the very antithesis of spiritual?

Have not the results of spiritualist manifestations—when they have been successful—been stupid, inane, puerile, or sordid?

Has not the whole history of spiritualism been one never-ending record of the exposure of trickery, imposture, chicanery, or self-deception?

Has not spiritualism been directly responsible—as I have endeavoured to show—for widespread insanity, suicidal mania, sorrow and tragedy?

Again I repeat, I have been discussing all through this volume, not the old, original, legitimate, spiritualism of spirituality, but the spurious, fraudulent, self-deceiving, modern spiritualism, which claims, falsely claims, that through some medium or other, human or mechanical,

SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED

it can establish actual, intelligible communication between human beings on earth and spirits.

Oh, the pity of it all !

When one glances through the history of modern spiritualism for the past sixty years, one is almost impelled to say with Tennyson—

“ When was age so cramm'd with menace ?
Madness ? written, spoken lies ? ”

Oh, the pity of it all !

